

REWRITE



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THE PROBLEM OF SELLING

It is just ordinary commonsense to say it takes possession of a product before anyone can be a salesman. Yet many writers neglect the simple precaution of knowing clearly in their minds what it is they are hoping they can sell. They just send out mss., perhaps a lot of them, with no very specific reason & plan for doing so. They just shut their eyes and clench their fists and grit their teeth, say, "Please, God, a sale." And that, I submit, is an unscientific method of going after the illusive check.

There are two kinds of writer salesmen. A few authors establish a certain type of material and live or die on the popularity of that one kind. Zane Grey is associated with a single specialized sort of story. He happened to be very popular right up to the end of his days. But a writer who knows, however capably, to manufacture only a single article of trade, may find himself as out-dated as a kerosene lamp in the age of electricity. Most professional pulp writers work the obvious hedge against such a situation. They learn to be equally good at westerns, adventure, romantic love, mysteries, etc. An editor, who thus plans a new book in the scientific or aviation fields, looks to one of his regular men pulp writers, who, perhaps, has been doing navy and marine stories. He tells him to bone up on the new subject.

It may seem more precarious, and it often is, but the general free lance has a better chance of pumping from a never-failing well. The reason for this is that like the general department store, he almost always has a subject that the public will want. The purchase of mss. never stops entirely. It merely rises and falls seasonally and in specialized fields. Right after a war, you can't give battle stories away; but there is a premium for good postwar problem stories. And so it goes. Once again, the writer who is basically a good writer, need not fear unemployment nearly so much as the unskilled drifter who simply rides the popularity waves.

So, the first thing for a writer to do is to analyze his materials, aptitudes and inclinations. He can greatly cushion his days of learning or his dry spells, by (1) gradually focussing on a special interest & (2) having several back-logs that he can depend on to bring him regular work. The increasing pre-occupation of Kenneth Roberts, Ben Ames Williams and other leading novelists in the American historical scene, is a tip-off. It is easy, if necessary, to drop one's underlying interest for a few days or months, in order to do a special assignment. As a matter of fact, being an "authority" in a special field will frequently bring one timely, but unexpected, assignments, which arise be-

cause the public wants to know what to think and to be guided by an expert. On the other hand, I have often seen Ethel Forbes refuse assignments she would at other times welcome—simply because her research or writing on a new novel had reached a crucial stage. An author with a number of popular titles regularly in print, represents an investment to himself and for his publisher.

Just as Elva and I (and even Billy) enjoy improving the productive ability of the land all around 50 West Street, by chopping wood, pruning the fruit trees, cleaning and rearranging the barn, the cellar, etc., so most writers can improve their chances of sales. To build an information file, collect reliable source-books, pamphlets, etc., is often the first step in doing research for an article, textbook or novel. And remember, no one can ever possibly foresee all the fruit that such work will develop. When you start putting "two and two together", there is no end literally to the combinations your imagination is likely to suggest.

If it is so with materials, it is identically the same with markets. You really and truly have no idea of all the pieces within your humble reach until you begin to make a detailed study of the markets. I know a lot of markets fairly well by actual experience and by hearsay. But as the reports come in, each month from you writers, I learn a great deal about markets that have been only hazy general targets in my mind. And there's not a single month goes by that I do not hear about some market I did not know existed and I know is totally unknown to the editors of published market lists. (Too often, these editors do not appear to read even their magazines published by their own companies, because repeatedly they miss items even my limited observation has noted in the month-by-month reports and tips.)

That is why I constantly urge writers everywhere to work together and build up good stocks of timely information. No one of us, working alone has the time, strength, money to collect, sort, collate and record in one permanent file all the flood of potential & usable information. But by working together we can make a beginning that will be available for writers on short notice. And under more efficient conditions here at NCS House we hope to do a lot more of that work. You can greatly help us by sending in your tips and telling us accurately their source, date and so on.

With materials and markets under your belt you can make a beginning at selling specific mss. And of course one thing leads to another; one sale often prepares the way for a second. But always think "big"; reach for a higher, better market, and a better program

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<u>PUT VALUES</u>	<u>William E. Harris,</u>	<u>PEACE</u>
<u>INTO YOUR</u>	<u>Elva Ray Harris,</u>	<u>IS YOUR</u>
<u>AMERICA!</u>	<u>Editors,</u>	<u>NECESSITY</u>

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YOU CAN AND MUST WIN THE PEACE!

Everywhere there is a feeling of frustration and fear over the existing world situation. Many people consider the conflict in ideologies between the East and West to be a hopeless stalemate. And that the individual can do little or nothing but accept the inevitable consequence: World War III. Actually, neither of those propositions is true. History never stands still. Just as in a story, there is a relentless chain reaction of action and reaction by two forces working against each other, grinding to its logical, irresistible conclusion.

But few persons stop to realize that ever at the bottom of this conflict is the basic core of Public Opinion: opinion in each individual state, in united groups of these & in the world at large. If enough groups desire war, or too many groups are indifferent and lethargic, there will be war. When militant Public Opinion is strongly aroused, a tidal wave of reaction sweeps in or out. The trend of world progress in one direction is often reversed. The pendulum swings back as when the Berlin Airlift, following the Italian elections, stopped the sweep of Communism across Europe.

But "Stop Communism" is not enough. That is a negative slogan, a defensive policy. It must be backed up by a positive faith, creative believing in some other ideology. Faith and belief are the product of millions upon millions of individuals feeling strongly about something, feeling strongly enough—to do whatever is necessary to defend, to propound and to establish that idea. Every idea, every great material step of progress, you remember, originated in the mind of one, single man; was seized upon eagerly, or reluctantly, but taken up by other men & nurtured until its good sense was finally, and

unmistakably accepted by the whole world. Often the road is long and winding; progress is not infrequently made by accidental discoveries, or the coincidental swing of intelligent thought and feeling. The unexpected, surprising precipitation of the "mercy death" case in Manchester, N. H., is an example of this very fact. But slowly progress is made and it is the result of the slow, imperceptible molding of Public Opinion. It can be exactly the same with World Peace. And Public Opinion will be inescapably shaped to the degree that every single individual everywhere understands and feels strongly about the issues at stake. Your security depends on it.

Many intelligent Americans think of their nation's domestic and foreign policies as being two separate and distinct articles. But actually they are inextricably intertwined. If we make bad mistakes at home, we can alter the fate of the world abroad. For practical example, if we spend too much money arming ourselves and not enough to help Europe make ploughshares of her relics of the last war, we will be inviting another war. Similarly, if we pour too much money into Asia and Europe for "relief" or even constructive rebuilding, we can bankrupt ourselves, and so be an easy mark for Communist armies.

If we allow wages and profits and prices, the inevitable trio of every business cycle, to get out of hand, we will have a national depression, as we did in 1929. The results, without any question, will be less military strength behind our bid for Peace, less aid for the other democracies we are trying, so sensibly, to strengthen in many parts of the world. Retrenchment, isolation, defensively sitting back and waiting for "prosperity" to come again, are the very best ways we possibly can aid the march of Communism.

"Stop Communism" is not enough! The fate of the world hangs on what Congress decides to do in this session. On what you, and you, and I think about domestic and world affairs and are prepared to DO! Three choices await us. They are: (1) Armed Might, (a Pax Americana) which is sure to win us the distrust and fear of the entire world and end in ultimate defeat. (2) Pollar Diplomacy, in which we capture all the world markets and dictate in a less obvious, but equally unpopular manner, to the rest of the family of nations. That is the policy England used for so many years in building the British Empire. It made for a material prosperity for the ruling class, but earned the undying hatred of all of the subject peoples. (3) Free Democracy. We can perpetuate the ideals that have made us the great and prosperous nation we are. We have first opportunity to support other peoples, everywhere, to build free democracies modeled on our own. To lead the world to a stable Peace through a voluntary United Nations. As we mobilize Public Opinion through constructive and unselfish use of our military, economic and moral strength, we will win lasting security and friendship of all peoples.

FUNDAMENTALS OF GOOD POETRY

By Elva May Harris

"WHERE LIES THE TRUTH?"

If one could learn to write a poem in the same way one learns to sew or type, both the teaching and the learning would be relatively simple. Becoming a competent poet would, then, be only a matter of persistence, if one could start at the beginning and learn say, the "stitches" of versifying, or the "finger- ings" of poetry. Then one could go on, mastering each step, one at a time, until ultimate skill had been reached. But there is so much to poetry beyond mere drilling & learning by rote, so much that comes out of one's self and which must find adequate expression, that this craft becomes very difficult.

Even the groundwork is not taught to much extent in the schools or at home. The average high school graduate has received a few semesters of critical instruction which are supposed to help him to an appreciation and love of poetry. Some students, however, have emerged from such courses hating Milton and Shakespeare, and feeling only the tolerance for Chaucer that one has for an aged person with whom he disagrees violently. But beyond a little help in determining the exact number of feet in a pentameter line, the number and accents of syllables in an iambic foot, the high school student gets no training in the actual writing or beauty of verse. Some colleges now give courses in poetry and its techniques such as the one Leonore Speyer, a practicing poet herself, offers at Columbia. But these courses are the exception, rather than the rule. And whether even these clarify one's mind and nurture the seed, depends largely upon the teacher. The young poet for the most part today finds his best opportunity for instruction in his art in his own, determined research in books and magazines. Or what he can learn first hand from poets, editors and imaginative critics at writers' conferences (all too brief!) held in scattered parts of the country.

But in spite of this deplorable situation many young poets usually feel no need for instruction until all of a sudden they wish to write their first real poems. That urge to create comes upon you without warning & you find yourself incapable of putting your poem into words for sharing with others. You are more helpless than the career girl, who unexpectedly falls in love and has a quick, vital need for domesticity. At least she can boil water, and, as complicated as running a house may be, the novice does not meet with so many intricate problems as does the new, untrained poet in building a poem. For the farther civilization advances, the more new theories are invented and presented regarding what really constitutes a poem. No two poets, critics or teachers ever seem to have the same notion. And so, the young poet has no security and feeling of confidence.

In the beginning there were only a comparatively few masters and hence models, to be emulated. The classics in the Greek and Roman tradition, of course. Chaucer, too, made an interesting study. Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth were not too radically different from one another. But as time went on new poetic extensions were dreamed up. And these new poetic inventions did not necessarily replace the old. They usually added a new way to write poetry. So, one could write in the Shakespearean manner or follow in the footsteps of Amy Lowell. One could imitate, for example, Alfred Noyes or Walt Whitman. A study of poetry is no longer simple, if indeed it has ever been. As poetry ceased to be the gift of a favored few seeking applause, and patronage from the ruling minority, and began to be practiced by ever increasing numbers of poets for an always wider, if often nominal public, it became increasingly complex.

The young poet today has been preceded by so many poets plying their craft in so many different ways, that his mind must be inevitably in a state of confusion until he has read, listened, and thought enough to know, very precisely, what he wants to do with poetry.

The more he reads, the more certain he'll become that while the critics usually agree on the fundamentals, they differ very widely in their interpretation of these truths. One praises E. E. Cummings for drawing "the threads" of his poetry together closely, another puns his stringing a lot of "meaningless words and parts of words" on a page. One declares Robert Frost to be "forthright & particular", another says he "achieves his points by what he leaves out", what he doesn't say.

But if the young poets experience confusion when they delve into books and magazine articles of analysis, they may be comforted by the fact that although this confusion is their enemy, it is at the same time their friend. One cannot do his best at creating, when he is doubtful over his method & style of expression. But this same doubt can spur him on, between periods of creation, to learn more about his art. And despite that, for a time, additional knowledge seems only to increase the confusion, it will eventually by means of inner growth build up his sense of confidence in himself. He can believe—more strongly in his own ability, when he observes how others are writing and the results they are getting. When he compares his own results and honestly and objectively finds they are favorable. He knows then that he has learned the fundamentals, and therefore, knowing that his principles are good, he has courage to believe in his own application of them.

So, Poets, don't be afraid to try out your wings. And keep on trying them. Be like the baby swallow that couldn't keep up with his brothers and sisters. His first flight was practically a fall. But although he sat ig-

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nominously for a long time in the dust, (I suppose he was watching the rest of the brood to study their technique), at length he made a long and successful flight to the roof of the garage.

Never mind how many times you fell. Every time you make a flight, make it the best you can at the time and don't be ashamed of it. Ten years from now it may seem very puny and immature. You will be flying in graceful intricate swoops and swirls then. But if your practice is skimpy now, Pegasus will leave you behind tomorrow.

BOOK FOR POETS

PINASURE DOME. Lloyd Frankenburg. Houghton Mifflin Co. \$3.50. Twelve modern poets have been discussed. James Stephens, T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, e. e. cummings, and Wallace Stevens in detail, seven others more briefly. If you have been puzzled by the moderns this is your chance for a guided tour of the work they do. Frankenburg has thoughts about the subject of technique, that you will not find in most books of instruction. A book to make a poet or a reader of poetry think. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

A LITTLE BOOK OF EPIGRAMS. Emily Scoles Stafford. Wings Press. \$1.75. Exactly what the title implies. A 64-page, hard cover book of short poems. Some are pointed, tersely, even tightly expressed, but more of them lack the sense of urgency that makes for an exciting reading.

SONGS OF THE SOUTH SEAS. William Sweeney. No price given and privately printed. A small book of lyrics inspired by Bible verses and written by a missionary to the Fiji Islands.

You can buy all your books from the WRITERS' BOOK CLUB. You save money through the "Book Dividend" plan and also help REWRITE to be a stronger magazine, to work harder in your behalf. It takes a lot of money to check market tips. Subscriptions alone don't cover it. But we want to keep REWRITE within reach of all writers.

The WCS Scholarship Fund. We gratefully & with pleasure acknowledge a sizable gift to the Fund from Writers' Fund, Inc. of NYC. A financial report on the Fund for 1949, will be published in our March issue.

A book that all writers should read & inwardly digest is THE MATURE MIND, H. A. Overstreet, \$2.95.

A PLEA FOR SUBVENTIONED BOOKS

Harrison Smith, The SAT. REVIEW OF LITERATURE, (Dec. 17th) and John Jamieson, editor of the H. W. Wilson Co., writing in PUBLISHING WEEKLY, both favor some method of financing other than writers' fellowships, for literary books of importance, but with a limited sale. Good idea. It should be done surely.

REWRITE'S ANNUAL AWARD OF MERIT

With this issue we announce each year the Annual Award of Merit presented by REWRITE, on the basis of the full previous year, for the writer who has done the most for himself and other writers. This year the competition was keen, but we are making the award to one writer:

Miss Carrie Esther Hamill

A token award suitably inscribed has been sent to the winner. Of last year's winners, one has died, and we have been getting very good reports on the other, Ray C. Winningham who is making a name for himself in the field of trade journalism.

The winners of the final quarterly prizes, for 1949, are: Ray Lill, and Virginia Sievert. Prizes have been sent to them.

We urge all writers to send in their battling average hits, and to join our WCS Minute Men in helping themselves and each other to keep abreast of the news and tips, the changes and conditions good and bad in editorial offices. Together we are better able to sell than alone.

TO ENCOURAGE BETTER READING

BETTER BOOKS FOR YOUTH, 335 5th Ave., NYC. "Better Reading Pledge Pads". These consist of 25 gummed-back pledges that young readers may sign and use as bookplates. Parents and friends are urged to buy them and encourage the interest of children. Pads retail at 25c each. The WRITERS' BOOK CLUB will gladly obtain them for you. Our share of the proceeds will go to the WCS Scholarship Fund.

Doubleday & Co. has added still another in a chain of book clubs, the Fireside Theater.

The Canadian Criminal Code now makes publication of "Crime Comics" a crime. Publishers are afraid that "Treasure Island" would qualify under over-zealous policing of this law. We believe on the one hand that publishers and booksellers should assume more responsibility for conducting their professions on a high ethical plane, making such laws unnecessary; and on the other that the importance and trust of an enlightened civil service should be stressed. We don't side-step laws covering acts of physical violence because we fear that public officials may convict a good, innocent man of murder. But we do hedge and equivocate in the name of "Freedom of Speech", when it is a question of a publisher, so-called, making money by pandering on the literary level. If pandering prostitution is a crime, why isn't pandering dirty "literature" also? Admittedly there is a controversial border-line: "serious" (alleged) books about abnormal phases of life. But these can best be adjudicated by a panel of experts selected in the public interest. More mature thinking all around is the real answer.

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AS THE FRENCH SAY: "WITH ABANDON"

It is a curious but not particularly surprising fact that the best articles you do, are usually the ones you know most about. A writer who has to compress and condense and write tightly, generally speaks with authority. I have learned to throw away and never waste my time on those pieces about which I know little. Occasionally, every writer has to do a certain number of stories with very little real information and only the scantiest research. Then you have to offer up an author's prayer and call on his sub-conscious to dig deep in the cupboard. Technique will sometimes pull you through.

It is almost always easy to spot an article about which an author admittedly behind the scenes feels shaky. First of all, there is a scarcity of facts. Secondly, he writes evasively in generalities. You won't notice him making any categorical statements of opinion. Thirdly, he will always be wordy; he will qualify every statement and he will let circumlocutionary verbiage creep in. "On the other hand it is nevertheless true that".... Nine words to get a sentence started, which perhaps in the end doesn't really "say" anything worth saying.

A writer who knows he is up against it, is not only dull and colorless, but intellectual and "tight". The feeling of strain that is within him, inevitably shows through. The reader senses it and himself feels uncomfortable. You can never fake, if you personally are ill at ease. Technique and imagination, with luck, will pull you through. But only if you resign yourself to the situation. If you enjoy the predicament and relish the opportunity to solve an artistic or technical problem, you may not do a superlatively effective job of exposition about your subject, but you will entertain your audience. And a person who does that, is forgiven much in a magazine or newspaper just as he is in Show Business.

Too few authors think of themselves as in Show Business. Yet your first job is to entertain. If you can be a quality writer and thinker, so much to the good. But your first job is to hold the audience in their seats. To do that, you must be able to forget your unimportant little self, be master of whatever situation arises. Sometimes it is just a natural sense of ease, or humor, or anger that pulls you out of it. Thus, most newspaper reporters and columnists are able to live up to the tradition of writing the other fellow's stuff, if he drops dead or is drunk, & actors learn to ad lib. There's a practical lesson as well as a laugh in the story they tell about W.C. Fields. A stagehand stumbled over a 1,000 watt flood lamp. It was kicked over & broke with a terrific bang. But the comedian imperturbably paused, sniffed, and then leaned confidentially in the direction of the audience. "Mice," he explained. Anger or humor? It matters not.

If you can get that perfect sense of real relaxation and detachment, so that any given piece of writing is only a job, that you do with feeling, but at the same time impersonal competence, you will find that you'll be a selling writer more often. And do it more easily. Don't strain. When you feel yourself getting tight, sit back from the typewriter and relax those tight muscles all over. Let your body and mind loosen up. And if that's not enough, go out and do a better job of research, or choose another story to tell.

THE PERFECT QUINIX

We have used it before. But when someone's gushing to you about how "fascinating writing must be," and "how fortunate you are to be an author" instead of holding some "very responsible" job, such as banker or statesman, just quote them Don Marquis:

"Webster has the words, and I
Pick them up from where they lie;
Here a word and there a word—
It's so easy, 'tis absurd.
I merely range them in a row,
Webster's done the work, you know;
Word follows word, till, inch by inch,
I have a column. What a cinch!
I take the words that Webster penned
And merely lay them end to end."

GOOD BOOKS COMING UP

THE WRITER & PSYCHOANALYSIS. Edmund Bergler, M.D. (Feb. 15th.) \$3.50. Doubleday & Co.

WRITING: ADVICES & DEVICES. Walter S. Campbell (Feb. 23rd.) \$3.50. Doubleday & Co.

EDITOR TO AUTHOR: The letters of Maxwell E. Perkins. (March.) Selected letters (200 and more) by the greatest editor of our time to some of his great authors in his 35 years at Charles Scribner's Sons. \$3.50.

WILLIA CATHER'S CAMPUS YEARS. Univ. of Neb. (Feb. 26th.) \$2.75. (Her early years as beginning writer, and the final comment about her by her famous contemporaries.)

BOOKS FOR WRITERS

GEMS & JEWELRY TODAY. Marcus Beerwald & Tom Mahoney. Marcel ROSE Co. \$10.00. A mammoth source book on the romance, properties, and late developments in the world of gems, and jewelry. An invaluable reference book.

BUILDING A CHARACTER. Constantin Stanislawski. Introduction by Joshua Logan. Theater Arts Books. \$8.50. A sequel to the previous book, "AN ACTOR PREPARES". These two books, as nearly as possible, are the handbooks of the director of the great Moscow Art Theater. Written for actors, they are very valuable for writers because of the director and actor being such a believer in life. Poets especially will benefit. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

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LEARN TO "TOY" WITH YOUR READER

We get the impression from reading a large number of fiction mss., that very few inexperienced writers have learned the art, the offensive trick, of teasing their readers. A clever author is as objective in his story-telling as an actor. The latter projects an emotion, so that he makes his listeners cry or laugh. But he is business-like about it, methodically seeing to it that he gets each and every laugh or tear, and in a word wins the full credit or value for the effect he's trying to achieve.

Most young writers are too serious in the telling of a story. They try to tell it the way it would actually happen, with a result that they become too literal. A scene therefore, is little more than skin and bones. It lacks overtones. A good actor plays a scene roundly, almost with abandon. If the situation asks the reader to believe that the hero is going back to the city and the heroine is never going to see him again, it is the job of the author to accentuate this possibility, even if he knows darn well, the sly cat, that this very scene is going to end in the kiss-and-clutch.

He should for example, drop into the dialogue some such phrase as, "Well, I guess I must be going. And this time it is for keeps. We did have a good time, didn't we? I sure will miss you." But don't spill it all in a single block speech. "Tease it." The hero, perhaps, looks at his watch, is regretful. A little sigh escapes from the heroine. Without facing the issue squarely, she tries to "hold" the handsome hero from walking out of her life forever. They reminisce, sigh, and approach the point again, but don't achieve it. A clock strikes, the hero prepares once more to leave, but doesn't. Have you watched a skilful actor make a hesitant exit? He starts to leave a dozen times, but stalls again and again, leaving some article behind in full view of the audience. Finally, as he approaches the door he makes it look as irrevocable as he can, but he pauses one step in front of the door. Perhaps he looks back over his shoulder for a final speech. Then his fingers caress the knob while the heroine stops him with a final plea. He shakes his head, appears adamant, "draws" still another try from the heroine. This stops him, momentarily, but he lets his back "talk" for him, while the audience is in a "tizzy". He acts as if he never were going to face about and come back. But he almost always does!

Perhaps you get the idea. Cat-and-mouse. A really imaginative director or playwright is good for hours of this sort of thing, without ever making it too obvious. And remember, it is one thing for you, the author, to play this kind of scene straight. You tease the reader. But suppose you compound it and let one of the characters do all this stuff deliberately. Suppose the hero wants a girl all the time, but pretends he doesn't. Ar-

tifice, it is wonderful, when you let one of the characters in on it, tip off the reader and make a second character the victim. The reader has a chance to play God and "see around a corner" so to speak. This is what's known as "sophistication".

Teasing the reader is based largely upon a thoroughly artificial set-up made as natural and innocent as possible. It combines an initial situation involving suspense, built up or made more complex by letting a reader in on a secret that one of the characters is not in on. For instance, you can have a lot of excitement, if villain tries to work his evil way upon the hero with a gun that isn't loaded. The reader knows it isn't loaded, & so does the villain, but the hero has to accept the facts as they appear on the surface. The reader will be splitting a gudgeon when and if it becomes important for the hero to turn the tables. And if the writer makes it important for the hero to act quickly, then delays the hero's discovery of his see-in-a-hole, and when he does discover that his opponent is really unarmed, makes it hard for the hero to take advantage of the villain's weakness, you will have the reader literally in stitches. Because the reader wants to see the hero triumph, but he is helpless to help him.

But suppose you reverse this situation at a high point. Instead of letting the gun be unloaded, let the reader discover with horror that the gun he was sure was unloaded, is on the contrary loaded and very dangerous. A still higher peak of interest can be reached if the reader realizes, after the hero "discovers" that the gun is unloaded, that the villain has committed the same mistake that the reader has: he, too, thinks the gun is "unloaded". Now, the reader is sitting on pins and needles, because he wants to "warn" the villain as well as the hero and—can't.

Do you see how complex this business of a good "tease" can become? There can be cross pulls and double reverses. The emotional relations between two characters are two-way. But not only does each of the characters in scenes have the opportunity of feeling about the other; they can like, dislike or be indifferent. And they can start by liking and end up by disliking. That means the writer, to all intents and purposes, has a choice of at least six (6), and perhaps eight (8) variations he can wring out of a simple two-man relationship. Actually, there are many more overtone gradations, if a writer is clever in splitting up his character or situational elements.

Few writers, as we said at the beginning, ever really exhaust the full possibilities. Yet that is what the reader is anxiously awaiting: the dramatic interplay of character and situation. As you think through your situations and "tease" the reader by making them look worse than they really are, you're becoming a better story-teller. Try it!

SOMETHING FOR WRITERS TO THINK ABOUT

Books into FILMS

BY PAUL S. NATHAN

THEY tell me that what I'm about to say is dynamic. Still, the opinions which I am passing along have been expressed to me by responsible people in the agency and publishing fields, and there should certainly be no harm in giving them an airing. Anyone who doesn't agree is welcome to a turn.

The criticism I've been hearing is that the larger literary agencies are so constituted as to be unable to do a good job of representing the average writer in his dealings with the picture industry. Furthermore, again in connection with pictures sales some publishers are said to be failing their authors.

Not so long ago, the argument runs, there used to be seven or eight major screen markets, and submissions of literary material were made mainly through the studio story departments. Now, however, since the growth of independent production, there are dozens of possible outlets, many of them with rather special requirements, and to complicate the situation still further, sales are often made not through regular editorial channels but as the result of extracurricular contacts with stars or directors.

Thus each book or manuscript possessing screen possibilities calls for a special campaign tailored to its own qualifications and the needs of the whole battery of potential purchasers. A large agency handling many properties and concentrating on a comparative few cannot, it is alleged, give every author this sort of service.

CRITICS of the present system point out that the agencies suffer, too, by having committed themselves (often by a blanket agreement with a publisher to take on all his books) to circulate stories in which they

writers should accumulate as quickly as it's humanly possible to do so. I would have given a lot to have some of them available when I was a fledgling writer. They are part and parcel of the education you absorb from the cradle to the grave, if you are a "born" author, who can simply not be kept from writing. I know that I still eagerly read these pieces whenever I see them. And W. Somerset Maugham says in his "A Writer's Notebook" he would gladly read, even today, the practical, commonsense notes of a professional writer about his practice of his craft.

"HOW LONG, HOW LONG, OH, LONG?"

The question is frequently asked us, "How long should a writer be forced to wait for a report on a ms.?" Being part Yankee and part Scotch, my answer is necessarily, "That always depends." Seriously though, each editor is a law unto himself. That is one reason

why we continually urge you to study the magazines. If you are familiar with a particular book, or with the report on it in one of the market lists, an answer may be readily apparent, and actually before your eyes.

Those who reason along the foregoing lines have come up with at least one suggestion which they claim would give the writer a better break: no publisher should routinely assign all his books to a single agent. Instead, galley should be shown to several people in a position to do a selling job on them, and the agent with the most constructive program for an individual property should be given a chance at it.

Certain publishers are also taxed with taking an agent's "cut" when a book sells to pictures (especially in the case of first novels), without having done anything except stand by and let the book make its own way.

ON BEHALF of the large agencies, it may, of course, be said that the success which has made them large is an intangible but not inconsiderable asset to the authors they represent. As for the publishers who share in the movie game, they might maintain that merely by printing and advertising a writer's work they have enhanced its value for the screen.

Just where The Truth lies in all this, I don't pretend to know; but at a time when the picture business itself has had to make changes to meet altered conditions, it may be worth while to reassess the methods by which books and stories are offered as film material.

PUBLISHERS' WORKS

NOTE: we reprint a good many articles of this kind because: (1) they are not easily accessible to writers; (2) they are general, but practical information pieces, part of a realistic experience that serious writers should accumulate as quickly as it's humanly possible to do so. I would have given a lot to have some of them available when I was a fledgling writer. They are part and parcel of the education you absorb from the cradle to the grave, if you are a "born" author, who can simply not be kept from writing. I know that I still eagerly read these pieces whenever I see them. And W. Somerset Maugham says in his "A Writer's Notebook" he would gladly read, even today, the practical, commonsense notes of a professional writer about his practice of his craft.

But, like every other subject, the one we are discussing can be broken down through the screen of common-sense. It takes longer obviously, to get a report on an over-length novel. Many publishers I know, have various readers throughout the office give a preliminary report. They do this work at night or after hours. Then if the book looks good, it is sent to an editor. (Katherine Forbes is a consultant on historical books.) But the author frequently is tied up with rush work. I think you will begin to see how the time can easily slip by.

Then vacation time is a low point that all considerate editors dread. Reading time is lost, the schedules get messed up. And in the winter an unexpected batch of sickness can do a lot of harm. What I am trying now to tell you is that reading time is often shorter or longer in the same office. A news-tip that an editor is on a swing around his talent scouting circuit, can often explain that over-long delay. And if you read it in a writers' magazine, as you should, you'd forego that anxious, impatient letter for a month or two. You should always know as much as possible about the magazines you're trying to hit. Even then, there are likely to be unexpected eventualities.

There is a marked difference between pay-on-publication and pay-on-acc. editors. The latter are likely to be quicker, although a few of the former have unusual records. The human equation is always there. You need to take it into account. That is one reason it is important to attend writers' clubs or go to summer conferences. You pick up a lot of very valuable grapevine gossip. One item, if it results in a sale, repays the whole cost of your investment of time and money often. But you may make several such captures.

A high inventory (an overstocked market) will usually mean a quick "no". On the other hand, a change of editors or the editorial policy will usually slow up reports. You know how every so often a store goes in for a drastic "face-lifting". Well, a magazine's lay-out is occasionally altered in the same way. You recall a few years ago how LIBERTY, after many years was thrown into confusion? And the commotion at COLIER'S recently? So on an average, a 2 to 4 weeks is about right, for most magazines. But length of time held does not mean much, unless a story is borderline one, that the editors can't make up their minds on. Be patient, then polite.

REWRITE

A MEDIEVAL EDITORIAL POLICY

It has been brought to our attention on a number of occasions that certain Protestant magazine editors make invidious remarks, of all things, to writers, who are able to hit both Protestant and Catholic markets. If an editor feels that way, one wonders why he is willing to admit that he or she reads magazines published by the opposite sect. To us it seems like a narrow, bigoted policy to demand that a writer should write for only one denomination. (If there is any really practical reason, we would like to hear of it.) And as for the veiled (blackmail) threat of "excommunication" (rejection), if an author writes for magazines that the particular editor does not approve of, that requires no comment from us. That it should even exist, in a land that gives the editor the freedom to perpetrate such narrow-minded isolationism, is unthinkable.

We are not Catholics, but in our longish, varied experience we have found the "Catholic" press, as distinguished from the Christian press, very tolerant and broadminded in this respect. We know many non-Catholics who have, as we ourselves have done, sold often to the Catholic magazines. We believe it is a healthy phase of writing when a writer is able to satisfy editors at two extremes, on merit alone. Certainly he is a better writer for thus accepting the challenge of responsible writing. In our own province we are glad to meet the need for writing this editorial, much as regret the necessity, and it is our earnest hope that no Catholic publication will use it as opportunity to deride heretical Protestants. We are all members of one family. And as an editor and layman, we have found a very wide and universal hunger among everyday folk for a greater awareness of this fact among active practitioners of, and believers in all religions.

THE BULLETIN BOARD

Charles A. Bennett Co., 237 No. Monroe St., Peoria 3, Ill., is the new address of Manual Arts Press.

UNITED CHURCH YOUTH, 14 Beacon St., Boston 8, Mass., is a 4-page newspaper that has replaced PILGRIM YOUTH (suspended in Sept.) It emphasizes news of youth activities, with a few features. Short stories: general experiences & problems of young people, 1,000 to 1,200 words (nothing longer). "We also wish articles on hobbies, sports, science, handicrafts, vocations, amusements, youth's problems & religious subjects: 1,000 or less. We buy pix: 50¢ to 3.00, depending on quality, source. Pay Acc. 1¢ a word for stories, and \$6.50 per M for articles."

LITERARY FLORIDA, E. S. Johnson, Box 3012, Tampa, Fla., started the new year right behind on its print schedule. It established a new deadline: 15th of the month prior to publication. Extended subs. one month, too.

BOOKS FOR WRITERS

WRITING NON-FICTION. Walter S. Campbell. The Writer's Popular Text by the Director of the courses in Professional Writing, University of Oklahoma, has been revised and some additional material introduced. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

MASTERPICTS. Ed. Frank W. Magill and Dayton Kohler. 2 Vols. Salem Press. \$10. There are 310 "sequence-by-sequence" summaries of the great classics and many currently popular & discussed novels, plays, epic poems, legends etc. It is an interesting idea, but because the plots are summarized and not detailed in a scene-by-scene manner, it is doubtful the full purpose of the book will be realized. I can show you what I mean by making the distinction between photographs and blue print specifications of a house. Which would anyone learn the most from?

TO MAKE PEACE. Henry W. Harris. The Excelsior Press. A classmate (no relation) of Bill has written an extremely thoughtful & practical book with a mission to help the world achieve Peace. Henry is an editorial writer and military columnist for the Boston GLOBE and has read widely, talked with many leading public officials, and done a lot of hard thinking. It is a good book for writers, one on which to sharpen their own minds.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WRITING SUCCESS. Ed. J. G. Frederick. The Business Bureau. \$2.50. Published originally in 1933, this anthology of articles by such men and women as A.A. Brill, Floyd Dell, Thyra Samter Winslow & Mary Austin, it still contains a good deal of practical knowledge about the "psychology" of a writer's life and his relation to his "art". Some of the case histories of writers, half of them were contributed by Thomas H. Uzzell, seem a bit dated and ex post facto. It's always dangerous to draw generalizations from a clinical summary of a psychological dissection, when the reader has only the dissector's say-so to depend on. Nevertheless, the writer with some maturity and experience is certain to gain awareness of his own condition and points of failure from a careful & thoughtful study of this book. We recommend especially Mary Austin's chapter. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

THE WRITERS' BOOK. Presented by the Authors' Guild, edited by Helen Hull. Harper & Brothers. \$4.00. Forty pieces by big name writers as an outgrowth of the Guild's annual talks for writers in New York City. All royalties benefit the Authors' League of America. This is a general handbook similar to WRITERS ON WRITING, but the coverage is even wider. Not a textbook in the ordinary sense. But there is a terrific amount of practical Know-How, good, illuminating shoptalk by writers, who have sold in the pulps, slicks, and quality markets. This is a book for the inexperienced writer to read and reread. Something for everyone. A WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

REWRITE

HOW'S YOUR BATTING AVERAGE?

Here is a chance for you to compete for a number of small prizes, and also pick up information about what editors are buying. The WCS Family includes all who patronize any of our various services. By helping us to write this column you help yourself and help us to maintain a constant and accurate check on a variety of markets.

Marguerite Kelliher

Fillers: Boston POST, Sunday POST, various radio columns.

Rebecca Phillips

Articles: AMERICAN BABY, Montreal STAR.
Stories: a number of religious papers.

Carrie Esther Hamall

Story: JOURNEYS.

Poems: OLIVE LEAF, TELL ME, THIS DAY.

Claude White (England)

Poem: Portland OREGONIAN

Song: KMA, Pittsburg, Pa. (Try-out via United Music Club).

Tennie Gaskill Toussaint

Article: Vermont LIFE.

Harry Edward Neal

Article: OUTLIER'S.

Virginia Sievert

Poem: NEW VERSE.

Mary Elsenau

Article: DAILY MEDITATION.

Paul Twitchell

Feature article: POPULAR MECHANICS.

Anne Pendleton

Short story: CHILD'S COMPANION

Send in your box-score. Remember that Elva and Bill are always interested in all of our WCS Family. Often, when you tell us the score, we can make saleable suggestions.

MIDWESTERN FELLOWSHIPS

Stanley Pergellia, The Newberry Library, 60 West Walton St., Chicago 10, Ill. should be added to the list of permanent organizations awarding fellowships. These are awarded irregularly for Midwestern Studies in the fields of history, biography, literary criticism, the contemporary social and political scenes, fiction and poetry. About 25 books, over a period of 6 years have resulted.

THE WRITER (ENGLAND) SPEAKS OUT!

In England, The WRITER wrote a sharp editorial in its January issue about the mms. it receives, on which the authors just haven't taken sufficient pains. The editor believes that many mms. can blame their rejection on this factor alone. Resubmissions proved the authors could much better. Think it over.

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR-PUBLISHER RELATION

On several occasions recently we've seen a suggestion that in order to give new writers a chance to appear in print, the older ones whose sales do not hold up, should be ruthlessly pruned out. We have the greatest sympathy for the new writer, but any such publication rule of thumb is ridiculous, would lead to complete sterility inside of a very few years. That is only one step away, incidentally, from the "censorship" of the Nazi and other dictators, who told authors: "You glorify the State, or you cannot publish."

Even a commercial publisher's list develops as a result of many factors. He selects all of his books because he hopes they will make money. But he chooses one because it is timely or important; another because he admires the author's craftsmanship; a third because it is a public service to publish it; a fourth because by publishing a book of poetry he does not want, he gets a novel that may be a bestseller. He lets one writer go, because the latter is too selfishly demanding. He loses a second because some wealthier competitor offers to spend more on "advertising" than he can afford.

Even the beginning author represents what is a considerable investment in time, money and publishing skill. I know of one case in which a publisher nursed a promising novelist along for ten years. Then the latter did a bestseller, and immediately was "stolen", by a commercial "pirate". The first publisher's investment in promoting the author at a loss over a period of years, was thus irrecoverable because the author selfishly considered only his own interests.

The matter of keeping a book in stock over a period of years is a vital one for every writer. You devote a year or more to doing a good job on a book. The publisher allows the book to go out of print. Your investment is lost. On the other hand perhaps your book has a sale of 200 copies a year—and sells out. The publisher kicks in a lot of money just to keep that small sale going on by reprinting. One author may sell 1,000 copies a year of three or four books, while another comes up with an occasional popular title that sells 10,000 copies in a month or two and then "drops dead" and can't sell another for love or money. Which is to be put aside, so that a "new" author may have an opportunity?

I say beware of the publisher with a high turn-over in his authors. Today, you may be the "new" author who gets a chance. But tomorrow you will be "O. P." (out of print) or sold down the river to the remainder houses or the popular reprints. It is nice for the new author to get his chance, but if you're just a professional writer trying to make a living by your writing, it is a lot nicer to have a publisher, who doesn't measure value in dollars and cents alone. Loyalty. Ah me!

REWRITE

WE JUDGED A PRIZE CONTEST

Last month Bill and Elva finished judging 57 short stories, 1,500 words or under, for the Annual Contest in this category that is sponsored by the National League of American Pen Women. It was the second time that we had had the privilege of judging for the league. This year we found all of the mss., which come from both inexperienced and professional writers from all over the U. S. A., closely bunched. It was not easy to select a pair of winners. Therefore, assuming a privilege of judges, we named in a tie two further mss. for honorable mention. We believe that all four of these stories are potentially salable, and that others will also get checks, when they have been slightly revised.

During the reading we kept careful notes. Aware that the resulting pattern of recurring tendencies offer almost a check-list of reasons why some mss. are accepted & others rejected by professional editors, we worked up an article from our notes. We think many writers besides those who actually competed may find this informal generalizing valuable for the shadow of editorial judgment, which it casts. Certainly it was instructive to us when we came to analyze why we had eliminated many of the mss.

The first thing we noticed was that a number of these stories really had no story to tell, or the editorial idea behind them was not strong enough. For instance, there was a story in which two persons faced each other and "looked" at one another. Both "Came to Realize" that the other was not what he appeared to be on the surface. But this irony was merely an isolated fact, didactically & impersonally reported to the reader. It had no resulting effect on the characters. The author used omnisciently two viewpoints and a flashback that seemed unnecessary, to let the reader understand what was after all only an accidental or coincidental fact, not a dramatic relationship.

Closely related to this weakness was one, which stems from illogical use of the material; i. e., there were plot non sequiturs. A scene would have no real bearing on the one that followed or preceded. One story, which started with a realistic setting, dashed us in the next into a world of fantasy. Only a very shadowy connective theory tied characters and settings together. A short story is not long enough for such juxtapositions. At least one story was based upon an illogical character premise. The reader just did not believe that under the circumstances any person would behave that way. That is fatal to the success of a story.

There were a number of mss. that had good scenes in them. Others that had strong basic ideas. In both cases the author wasted a short story form by trying to compress into a short story something that needed greater

space for satisfactory development. A writer inevitably will fail, if he lacks sufficient imagination or skill to mine material in the most effective way. "Hell," you must surely recall, is reached by a road that is admirably "paved with good intentions." The parables of Jesus repeatedly underscored the fact that unwise use of one's gifts is never an acceptable "alibi" on the day of judgment.

Perhaps it is the present popularity of the anecdote for use as a filler, but explain it as you will, many of the entries were merely well told "true experiences". They lacked the understanding and evaluation of people and human nature that we have come to expect and demand of the fuller bodied "short story". Last night, Elva and I read (at one sitting) a farcical sketch by "Saki", and a short story, "Permanent Wave," by Mrs. Edith Wharton. The first was simply amusing whimsy about an aging bachelor who never got around to marrying, and finally became engaged to the wrong girl. Style and sharp edged entertainment through playful buffoonery in the use of words, is the slight, but skilled métier of "Saki". In Mrs. Wharton's story all that happens is that a sloppy, slovenly but expensively dressed woman, who aimed to leave her husband and elope with a romantic explorer, twice gets confused as to the day of the week. Again, a master of style, but a great technician and story-teller, too, impossibly tears the veil from a silly, shallow woman. She does it almost entirely by implication, studied use of words to imply an ironic, cruel, ruthless thought totally opposite to the literal meaning of the words. For the poor woman convicts herself by what she says and thinks and feels.

Change of viewpoint, which confuses readers and prevents them from completely identifying themselves with one character, proved to be the outstanding and most universal technical defect. In some cases it was done a number of times, in others only once in a single story. In the latter instances it was generally done to achieve an effect and so the intention was good, but the dissipation and loss of impact on the reader was nonetheless real. Only the very skilled and experienced author can depart from a single viewpoint & retain the full impact of a good story.

Almost identical to this weakness was that caused by the author intruding into a story and telling it (explaining) for the actors, instead of allowing them to live the story. Didactic exposition is always weaker than a dramatic scene in which the actors speak for themselves. Too many of the stories appeared to be "told" rather than unfolded by the means of dramatic narrative. And as usually happens in such cases, there was a lack and disparity of humor. The author permitted the feeling of strain to creep in. It is easier always to satisfy a reader when you don't try too hard. The light touch, the sense of humor growing naturally out of the material,

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helps a great deal to put the reader at ease. Ironically, it does not take nearly as much concentrated effort to convince the reader. You lull his disbelieving mind to sleep.

One weakness we noticed derives from that very characteristic that makes a short story so effective when it is well told. I refer, of course, to the surprise ending. A lot of the stories failed in their intended impact, because the "surprise" grew out of, and depended entirely upon, an obvious, very easily foreseeable character trait. In some cases the author "reversed" the action a bit too dramatically in the "presto-change-o, I am a magician" manner. It just didn't force a reader to believe. In at least one story, for me at least, the author sentimentalized the character-trait to such an extent, that I was not convinced. And one or two stories turned along a very conventional line. Perhaps the most obvious of these was the old, and much abused, plot in which the miserly, cruel old husband of a sweet young girl who was in love with the handsome farmer on the next farm, was electrocuted by a blown down high tension wire. (A variation of that plot incidentally, was entered in the short story contest that WRITERS' COUNSEL SERVICE sponsored and which led to the founding of this magazine, REWRITE, some ten years ago!)

The hardest of all the eliminations which every judge has to make, are those stories, that in the final analysis are just not good enough. There were many of this kind in the Contest. You could not always pin down just exactly the reason they did not hit you. But in the final reading and rereading that every judge worthy of his responsibility must give, this type of story never stands up. A minor technical fault, a weakness in a writer's artistic conception or some other little failure is generally the trouble. Sometimes it is just the lack of seasoned skill in the author. In another year or two he'll develop that extra something that makes the reader's pulse race, pulls him out of chair in a fever of excited praise.

This is the weakness that no editor or agent will tell you about. We have tried occasionally to point it out, but generally a writer simply goes away believing that we're trying to alibi our own incompetence. However, when such a writer has the guts, sheer determination just to keep writing one more story and then one more, and to try to make each better than the last, we have seen the writers triumph over this one last hurdle. The pity is that sometimes they give up—at the moment when victory is almost in sight.

One of the things that so many writers do not seem to realize is that there never was or will be in this game any single final or conclusive victory. When you have finished a story, there follows a momentary breather & then you have to start thinking what or who your next story is going to be about. Death is the only victor in this race! Neverthe-

less, it was a stimulating Contest. We congratulate the National League of American Pen Women and all the contestants. They did good work, and we hope that many of these men in the near future will appear in magazines.

CAN YOU WRITE A GOOD CATCH LINE?

In "The Writer's Book" Richard Summers has a good point in his article, ON SHORT STORY writing. He calls attention to the vital importance of good opening "Catch lines". And he goes so far as to suggest that their absence is the first thing an editorial reader notices. He says such an absence in some instances might even lead to immediate "rejection slip" return without further examination. Mss. are very carefully checked and editorial readers trained or supervised, but that is one of the "signs" by which busy editors apply the negative check, which naturally comes first. It is always easier to be certain of what you don't want; than you're able to concentrate on the possibilities of what you have screened out. (This is a follow up "positive" check.) If writers in the task of getting a ms. ready, would consider these things, they could eliminate a lot of the smaller rejection factors.

What is a "catch line"? Smaller than narrative hooks, it is the sentence that promises something or jumps the reader into the middle of a situation. Mr. Summers' choices of examples are all honeys, because he picked them at random from then current periodicals, and got a cross-section from pulp to quality. In every one the reader is practically prevented from not reading on. Stern discipline would be required to keep away.

Here are some catch lines picked casually from a variety of sources. "It had been raining all afternoon." (Invented. Now what? is the reader's reaction.) Remember that oldie so many writers have used to start them going? "Mary slammed the refrigerator door, & ran crying upstairs." (Why?) "Yes, it was white. That, John was sure of." ("Gently O'era Perfumed Sea" by William Wright, lead story in PRAIRIE SCHOOONER, Spring, 1949.)

"Carol lived in hotels, and her governess was always being mistaken for her mama."... ("Bubbles" by Wilbur Daniel Steele, The Pocket Book of O. Henry Prize Stories.) "Fireman Jimmy Lamb held three tens with the queen of hearts and the ace of diamonds." (C.S. Forester, Sat Eve. POST Stories, 1942-43.) "He was not yet dead." (G.T. Fleming-Hoberts, ARGOSY & Best Detective Stories, 1946.)

There is a sprinkling of catch lines from quality to high class pulp. They are "good" examples, because in practically all of them the effect achieved is interest-catching, & yet it is not sensationally so. It can be easily overdone, although the inexperienced or beginning writer would do well to stress an action opening with more conflict. Point is to pique their interest with a quick jab.

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NEWS NOTES HERE AND THERE

Motion Picture Association of America, 28 West 44th St., NYC 18, issues a semi-monthly "joint estimates of current motion pictures", which combines the recommendations of several national women's organization (General Federation of Women's Clubs, the American Association of University Women, etc.) and also a bi-monthly list of pictures made from books and plays. The J. E. summarizes, and discusses briefly the plots of each picture. REWRITE is now on the list for both of these papers, which are available to teachers, editors and officers of organizations. Apply as above.

General Market Note. Reflecting the general state of uncertainty, several writers in letters to us have reported editors returning mss. (some paid for, some not) that had previously been accepted. This is disheartening, but it emphasizes your stake in doing everything you can to achieve Peace & relative stability in the world. Editors everywhere are lowering their inventories in the long run this means they will have to buy a lot more mss. So, now is the time to write, polish, get ready for the buying period that is certain to come. In the meantime, there's a lot of selective buying going on. But you have to dig it out by patiently studying as many tips and lists as you can. WGS writers by following sound practices, are selling.

WORDS, Belle S. Mooney, Box 2174, Kansas City, Mo., (United Amateur Press Association) written by a longtime subscriber and friend, is one type of "vanity" writing that we at REWRITE approve of, in principle. Writing has always been a business, a method of earning a living, a way of life for Bill and I. So we never have had the time or money to play with the physical side of publishing. However, amateur journalism is a good hobby.

THE JOY OF BIOGRAPHICAL WRITING

Here is an interesting note, from Rebecca Phillips. It concerns the satisfaction that a writer may derive from biographical writing. "I have truly enjoyed my own writing—the past few months—more than at any other time in the past 12 years. Most of it's been biographical. I was enamored of my subjects. I lived with them and their families, & felt richer for doing it...Real people are such a lot of fun to work with."

It's a rewarding experience to write about, i.e., to report and dramatize, actual events. A good training, too, for the writer who possesses enough maturity and objectivity to be able to handle his material skillfully, knowing what he is trying to accomplish. If you have the facts ready-made at hand, you have some guidance, at least a sampling of form, on which to build. You are not starting absolutely from scratch. It helps the beginning writer quite a bit. It gives him morale an injection of self-confidence.

THE BULLETIN BOARD

THE LAMPLIGHTER, Eleuterio J. Trope, USS Thomas Jefferson, 6 PPO, San Francisco, Cal., is another hobby magazine that reaches us every so often. Trope belongs to United, American and National Amateur Press Associations. He is an ardent missionary for Peace. Like Belle Mooney, he reprints and publishes the work of other poets and writers. In fact, he has improved his format and at the same time added a staff of contributing editors based here in the U.S., Germany, the Philippines, & Japan. Truly an international publication! A copy may be had for a stamp. Good amateur journalism is not a waste of time.

SALESMANSHIP--"The art of adapting one's personality to that of another, the prospect."

Isn't that something for writers to think about! We always have two prospects whom we must please: the Editor, and his Reader.

SOME MARKET TIPS

SUNDAY PIX, David C. Cook Publishing Co., Elgin, Ill., is reported to be in the market for non-picture-strip material. Stories of adventure, mystery, high school activities, etc., slanted to both girls and boys of 15-17 years. Also: 250-750 word animal features giving accurate information about the well known and little known animals & birds. Puzzles, quizzes and other fillers, religious & non-religious. Fiction: 1,000 words.

POPULAR HOME, U. S. Gypsum Co., 300 West Adams St., Chicago 6, Ill., pays \$100 ("One month before publication, no items returned, and keep them short") for "home experiences, if they are amusing, interesting or helpful to others, who are building, remodeling, repairing, improving or otherwise experiencing the joys and tribulations of home ownership." (The anecdote we saw used concerned 2 mathematicians, who were admiring a pair of new houses built along functionally progressive and mathematical lines. In between stood an old fashioned colonial house. "Who's the ignoramus who built that impractical old box, in the middle?" exclaimed one of the professors. "Oh, that," replied the third expert, "belongs to Dr. Albert Einstein.")

Remember that while the market for material in these commercial mail-order advertising house-organs is thin (only one anecdote a month is used), the competition is greatly reduced, as compared to READERS' DIGEST, for instance, because not so many practicing writers are familiar with them. And POPULAR HOME gives the author his by-line, and Home Town, as well as sponsoring dealer.

THE HARLEM QUARTERLY, Box 974, GPO, NYC 1, is a new literary magazine aiming to publish quality stories, poems, articles about Negro and African folk especially by young, promising Negro writers. But writers of all races are welcome. Editor: Benjamin A. Brown.

NEWS OF PRIZE CONTESTS

The Albert Ralph Korn lyric award of \$100 is being offered for poems not over 34 lines. Open to all poets in the U.S.A. Mss. should be submitted in triplicate with the authors name and address in a sealed envelop marked with the title of the poem only. No ms. will be returned. Closes: March 1, 1950. Address: Korn Lyric Award, Margaret Widdemer, 1 West 67th St., NYC 23.

Bill & Elva have just finished judging the short story contest for the—National League of American Pen Women. A large quantity of mss. and an unusually high level of general excellence.

The Christophers, Joseph A. Duffy, Contest Manager, 18 East 48th St., NYC 17, will offer this year \$15,000 for a book, \$10,000 for a motion picture, and \$5,000 for a play. The contests close: November 1, 1950. The authors, of course, make their own arrangements for publication and use. But last year's awards were followed by speedy acceptance of a number of mss. found interesting by readers for the final judging.

To reduce the labor and cost of this preliminary sifting, mss. this year must come, in the book contest, from a publisher or an agent; in the drama contests from a producer or drama agent. (Note: we will be pleased to sponsor, or arrange sponsorship gratis for responsible authors, or mss. that we are familiar with and believe could be seriously considered.) It is important writers should remember that these contests are for the encouragement of "better quality books, motion pictures and plays for the vast audience—the tens of millions, who are reached through these important media." Mss. with a limited appeal thus would probably not gain serious consideration.

Monthly Christopher News Notes are mailed gratis to any adult addressing a request as above. An annual cost of \$200,000 for doing this is met by goodwill donations.

First Class Mail. Writers who send any mail out flat or in an extra size envelop, should be careful to mark it "First Class". A rubber stamp is not a luxury. It used to catch postal clerks' eyes. During the "Christmas-New Year's rush" we saw many evidences of a slow delivery on this type of mail. A first class package marked only with a two figure metered mail stamp, was postmarked December 20 in NYC and restamped December 27 in Boston. It thus took about 10 days to cover an ordinary 3-day mail trip. Time may or may not be an important element in your case. But a ms. that is lying around in post offices is not helping you to cash in on your writing. And every day added to each round trip lessens the number of round trips a ms. can be given in a single year.

So be wise. Don't take chances. Mark it!

A GREAT PROJECT GETS UNDER WAY

The Magazine Committee, Maude Parker, executive chairman, The Authors' Guild, 6 East 39th St., NYC 16, is doing an unusually effective project. It is gathering exact data regarding the editorial policies of the major magazines. The first of these reports—in loose-leaf form capable of being bound in permanent form, has already been mailed out to members. It is hoped to procure information about as many other magazines, "in the general field as possible." All members of the Guild are earnestly requested to report "any discrepancy between your own experience and the stated policy of the editors." This can obviously be reported back to the editors, who will be forced to explain, or even correct, any abuses that may be uncovered.

This project is an enlargement of a practice that NEWSITE has been pursuing for several years under our informal "Minute Men" reporting system. It is backed, however, with the greater resources and authority of this the oldest mutual protective group of writers in America. We hope that writers cooperate actively in making this project realistically effective. (Incidentally, we cannot help being pleasantly amused, because for a number of years we have urged several writers' magazines, which publish market books, to adopt this loose-leaf principle. "Impractical," was their dismissal of the idea.

Practical Suggestion. The Authors' League has had a need of larger financial backing. This past month it has published a book for writers, to raise money. It also conducts a series of lectures in New York City for the same worthy purpose. We suggest: the League could make money and at the same time bring new members into its various Guilds by making this new project generally available to writers everywhere. With the added financial support of public subscription, it could extend and improve the very fine beginning, thus benefitting its own members at no added cost! As we all work together, we are much stronger than if we stand alone.

COOPERATION IN ANOTHER FIELD

In another direction we notice that UNITED MUSIC CLUB, Box 808, Pittsburg 30, is enlarging its contacts with radio, band, recording contacts that benefit songwriters. A hard row has been hoeed, but the Club gradually has acquired increased authority, prestige and bargaining power in speaking for a member of its organization, who has a really good song and is willing to cooperate in the Club's programs for putting it over. In the songwriting field more than anywhere it is necessary for the writer to develop team spirit.

Last month's SONGWRITER'S REVIEW reported in very plain terms what NEWSITE has known, "off the record" for some time. Post Office officials are moving against song baskets.

REWRITE

A LESSON IN CREATING CHARACTERS

From the FORUM, Ray H. Wiley, inmate publication of the Nebraska State Prison, comes this thought-provoking definition of "Character", credited to M.D. "Doc" Rutherford.

"Is Character something you are born with, something you inherit, as you do the shape of your nose or feet? Or is it something which you acquire from environment?"

To all of these the answer is 'No'. Character is formed by daily and hourly choices, made between good and evil, courage and weakness, and between aimless drifting & planned struggle. If you live with reliable and balanced people, you will be reliable and balanced—yourself. You will be spineless and shifty, if you are in a demoralizing atmosphere.

You can't inherit Character, nor can you, through a fortunate destiny, have it thrust upon you by the earnest efforts of others. Character is something which you must build for yourself, by your own choice day by day.

Character may be built by deeds, and also by thoughts. "As a man thinketh, so is he." Thoughts can demoralize you as surely as any act. Even though you may appear polite, precise and prudent, your secret thoughts may, on occasion, show that you are vicious, cruel, greedy, vulgar, scheming and intolerant. These secret thoughts will eat away Character, just like termites gnawing wood in hidden timbers.

Character is never achieved in one bound.

NEWS OF THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Complaints issued: Educational Train Service, Inc., Camden, N. J. Misrepresentation in the sale of courses intended to "prepare students for Civil Service positions".

BOOKS FOR WRITERS

The following books were received too late for complete review and mention on WRITERS' BOOK CLUB page.

COMMUNICATING IDEAS TO THE PUBLIC. Stephen E. Fitzgerald. Funk & Wagnalls Co. \$3.50. A serious evaluation of the several media the publicity and public relations writer finds available in today's highly articulate commercial world. Full of anecdotes and practical analyses of techniques that have proved effective or gone wrong. A writer can learn a lot from these inside, authoritative lessons concerning the psychology of readers & WRITERS' BOOK CLUB Selection.

Schoyer's vital Anniversaries for 1950 will Schoyer & Co. \$2.00. Now in its third year, this tool is becoming increasingly valuable to writers. Hundreds of unique and news-peg anniversaries are listed and described. Lots of hard work eliminated, ideas dug up. Good!

or one resolution. It must be created during a lifetime of endeavor, a thousand small and often seemingly irrelevant and inconsequential tiny acts and decisions.

Character is that spark which God breathed into inanimate clay. A spark of Character must become a blaze shining throughout a world. This blaze must be guarded carefully or it may be quenched by oily compromises.

Character is what you make it. It's up to you."

Think of these things the next time you're bothered by the problem of making characters "come alive". Don't try to build characters by merely planning typed traits on them, but rather by dramatizing their inner resources as "Doc" suggests, by all the little acts and thoughts and small decisions they themselves make and think and do, and which you manage to weave into the fabric of your story. Get the feel of that eternal struggle that ebbs and flows, which is the very heart-beat and pulse of life.

George Bernard Shaw once wrote about what evil things good people sometimes do—quite contrary to their best intentions and whatever character they have hitherto considered they possessed. It is often this difference between what people think they are and what they do under pressure of unexpected & unplanned for emergencies, which is the very pith of drama.

THE BULLETIN BOARD

Carrie Esther Hamill, R.D.4, Box 182-A, is now handling magazine subscriptions. She is a shut-in, who is also one of our "Batting-Average" prize winners, a frequent reporter of news items and market tips, and a prolific writer. She frequently has as many as 50 or more mss. in the mail at once.

The World Council of Christian Education, 135 5th Ave., NYC 10, is seeking \$250,000 to extend its work with children and the youth of Asia, S. A., Africa, Europe. A cooperative body that helps the individual denominations to accomplish projects they couldn't handle alone. "Teach the children today and shape the world tomorrow!" Hitler knew that

The world is very small. One of the prize subscriptions REWRITE awarded in connection with the work of the Hospitalized Veterans' Writing Project, went to the Press Club Library, Co. 3, U.S.V.A. Center, Bath, N.Y. A letter of thanks was received forthwith from H. E. Duncan, former circulation manager of the Fitchburg Daily News. (Next town to us!)

Rebecca Phillips reports that a member of the writers' group she belongs to sent to 12 leading publishers a questionnaire as to interest in a new writer, type of material desired, etc. She got replies. Several stated biographies had the best chance.

REWRITE

"NEITHER BOARD NOR NE A SPENDER FREE"

Don't forget that whenever you are writing for publication, in a sense you are selling your vitality. George Bernard Shaw once derided teachers of writing by quoting the old adage, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach". What he really was doing, was boasting for sardonic publicity effect of his own vitality and well used exuberance. Shaw is a very practical businessman, who had a hard row to hoe at first. Out of that bitter experience he developed his naturally quixotic Irish wit, his cynicism over the lack of intelligence of men as regards their own interest, and his own fierce determination to advance the ideas he believes right. But it is easy to read between the lines, and spot his own realization of the truth as rationalized above. In his struggle to survive, he learned the lesson that every artist in every field eventually discovers: that he has to sell his vitality as dearly as possible.

That is the basic cause for the high cost of movie actresses, baseball players & other types of skilled entertainers. They have only a few years in which to commercialize highly developed skill. They must must cash in on those few golden years, or face a reality of a penniless old age. Many of them do not wake up in time; some go to the other extreme and in bitter contempt of the "hungry" devitalized masses hoard their own fat!

The RURAL NEW YORKER celebrates its 100th issue this month (Jan. 7th issue, a big one). It will be a good one to read and digest.

Tell It to the Smallest Ones

by RUTH McKAY

It was Kate Douglas Wiggin who said, "I would rather be the children's story-teller than the queen's favorite or the king's counselor."

Especially is it a joy to be a story-teller for the smallest child. To him the world is new, with all the creatures in it. And, closely akin to him, for such is the nature of childhood: He sees himself endlessly reflected in it.

So it is that in all experience, in all forms of art, the child's first response is one of recognition. "Baby" says the toddler when he catches a glimpse of himself in a mirror or sees another baby not far away from him.

"Daddy" . . . "Katy" the child sees in the second phase of recognition when he begins to notice things outside of himself—familiar things, objects of his world in picture or the spoken word. The cycle of recognition is complete.

For a long time there has been, in the back of my mind, an idea for an imagination book that studies this desire of the child to recognize himself, while relating him to the young of other living things. Often, when my own children were little I thought of this similarity. How like puppies they tumbled around on the floor! How like a sleepy kitten they seemed full of milk! All God's children have similar expressions, perhaps because they like the puppy or kitten, can not always make themselves understood!

At the years being transient and self-consciousness new to us as adults, this delightful relationship

of the young of all creatures is endearing. It is enchanting to watch a little cat feeding just as it is to watch the First Born of the family nursing!

The thought behind the book, obviously, is simple. The creature of it proved not so simple. It was a matter of scaling our language down to miniature size. Then, it seems before the children's story-teller appreciates the unparallelable simplicity of Mother Goose.

For example, in the making of my book, *Just Like Me* the problem was to find exactly the right word. Does the baby chicken—or the little child—at the end of the day seek Mother? No, seek a grown-up word. Does he find Mother? No, for that suggests he must search for her and *destroy* the considerable sense of the mother's resource. Rather he wants Mother "just like me." What seemed to be the word we wanted, for it is heart felt and warm.

When the child grows older, story-telling holds infinite, imaginative possibilities. Tales of the knights of old, folk lore and the rest of the wonderful realm of fancy stretch as a charming vista before his eyes. But the vista of the two to four year old is not so extensive. It is bound on the north by Mother; on the south by Father; on the east by Sister; on the west by the dog, the cat, the rabbit, etc. All the pictures growing things, God's creatures put into his ever interesting, ever appealing world.

How to Make Money (?)

TRY A MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION AGENCY

If you are a part-time free lance writer, who needs a side-line income to finance the business of writing, a magazine subscription agency may be the answer. On another page we have a brief reference to an article by one of our friends about a woman doing this very thing, largely by telephone. Such a project has several advantages for writers. You can keep your finger on the pulse of markets, & even "study the book" to a considerable degree. It helps you to get sample copies because if you deal directly with the periodicals, you can request samples and promotion material at only the cost of the postage for placing an order plus whatever is necessary to cover the samples. But as your business, reflected in your orders, grows, publishers and agencies will cooperate with you & send you more "free literature".

Most professional agents find it more efficient to work through one or more regular wholesalers. There are quite a number which operate on a large and established scale. A single letter to one of these will clear 50 orders, let us say, and save you 49 letters and follow-up checkings, if one of your orders gets mislaid. Here is a list of a few: Moore-Cottrell S. A., No. Cohasset, N. Y.; F. W. Faxon Co., 83 Francis St., Boston, Mass.; Franklin Square Agency, 32 No. Van Brunt St., Anglewood, N. J.; Hanson-Bennett Magazine Agency, 529 So. Franklin St., Chicago, Ill.

ORGANIZE YOUR READING

In calling some of our delinquent subscribers, we have been considerably shocked to discover the number of persons who subscribe to periodicals, but do not read in them. And this curious tendency extends to an assortment far beyond the limits of professional magazines, such as your writers' books. Undoubtedly, this is due in part to the busy lives of so many of us today. But it is the result, too, of our letting things get ahead of us, and not knowing how to read efficiently.

We at WCS House glance at most of the incoming second and third class mail as it arrives. We try to position it in organized piles which we constantly cut down and eliminate. A lot of this can then be discarded in a moment or two in spare, and often scattered minutes. The rest because it is organized, can also be reduced or digested fairly rapidly.

We read all of the writers' magazines. We do this quite quickly, by reading rapidly and saving for further reference certain pages, which we often tear from the book. We keep at it!

McClure's BOOK NEWS

REWRITE

THE NEWS OF THE WRITERS' BOOK CLUB

Book buyers once again will find the horn of plenty overflowing. There are almost too many good books about writing being published simultaneously. So, we will plunge immediately into the list.

THE MONTH'S SELECTIONS

THE WRITER'S BOOK. Presented by the Authors Guild, edited by Helen Hull. \$4.00. The most all round, serviceable handbook available. A great book, full of "Know How", by almost a half a hundred big name, successful writers. Every serious writer should own it. You'll find it useful for reading and rereading. A book to check your own growth against.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WRITING SUCCESS. Ed. J. G. Frederick. \$3.00. Originally published 1934 this book analyzes many writer problems well.

WRITING & SELLING FACT & FICTION. Harry Edward Neal. \$2.50. By a member of the WCS Family, who teaches in Washington, D. C. And a writer in his own right, too.

BUILDING A CHARACTER. Constantin Stanislavski. Intro. by Joshua Logan. \$3.50. One of the great books of all time for anyone, who would create. The master actor and director of the Moscow Art Theater shows what all of us mean, when we talk about "getting inside a character, inner emotional relations, and using life (reality) as the core for creating an artificial illusion". Moreover, his complete absorption, his life in art, and, most of all, the art in him, is bound to be terrifically stimulating and exciting to serious writers, indeed, to anyone interested in creating at all. This book is an "absolute MUST", and should be prefaced for most profitable results, by the equally exciting and rewarding **AN ACTOR PREPARES**, Stanislavski's earlier book about his art of faith.

PLEASURE DOME. Lloyd Frankenburg. \$3.50. An enlightening book about 12 modern poets, in which a writer of poetry can learn a lot about technique. Good, thoughtful writing.

CONTINUED RECOMMENDATIONS

WRITERS ON WRITING. Ed. by Herschel Brickell. \$3. A very practical, all around handbook by members of the UNH Conference staff, including William E. Harris. Good general reference.

HUMAN NATURE OF PLAYWRITING. Samson Raphaelson. \$4.00. Based on a seminar by one of the most popular Broadway light comedy writers.

111 DON'TS FOR WRITERS. Maren Elwood. \$2.95. Practical, specific, positive analysis of a lot of common mistakes made by writers.

ARTICLE WRITING & MARKETING. Geo. I. Bird. \$5.00. Very practical and detailed. A book every non-fiction writer should read.

THE WRITTEN WORD. Gorham Munson. \$2.95. One of the most stimulating books on writing.

WEBSTER'S NEW COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY. \$6. No better dictionary for the price exists.

PLOT DIGEST. Kobold Knight. \$5. This is the best book on Plotting we know about. We are exclusive agents for it and it is proving a real best seller. Sound and practical.

THE WRITERS HANDBOOK. \$4.50. The most reliable market list in book form available. It has 69 articles of great value also.

BOOKS OF PERMANENT VALUE

CRAFT OF THE SHORT STORY. Richard Summers. \$5.50. A realistic, factual book on techniques of writing and being a writer. Summers talks the language of writers. You'll like it.

WRITE THE SHORT STORY. Maren Elwood. \$3.50
CHARACTERS MAKE YOUR STORY. Each.
111 DON'TS FOR WRITERS. \$2.95. 3 good books.

STORY WRITING. Edith Mirrielees. \$3. One of the all-time best books by a great teacher.

FIRST PRINCIPLES OF VERSE. Robert Hillyer. \$2. A basic book for all poets by a good poet.

WRITING NON-FICTION. Walter S. Campbell. \$3. A revised edition of a perennially popular, and much used text-book.

WRITING & SELLING SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLES. Helen Patterson. \$4.55. Perhaps the best of the books on this subject. A product of the Univ. of Wisconsin School of Journalism.

WRITING JUVENILE FICTION. Phyllis A. Whitney. \$2.50. A successful author tells how.

WRITING FOR CHILDREN. Berry & Best. Another practical book by authors who sell in their special field. It applies to adult work, too.

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